

Alaska Effective Schools Framework

OVERVIEW

The Alaska Effective Schools Framework provides an organizational structure for the principles of effective schools. It is a framework that guides the focus of the work in school improvement and provides the foundation for school planning tools and processes used by education systems and professionals throughout the state. It establishes a standard by which Alaskan schools can gauge effectiveness, evaluate strengths and weaknesses, and coordinate ongoing efforts to improve student performance and school effectiveness.

This framework is organized around six domains that current education research and best practices indicate are critical areas of focus in successful schools:

1. Curriculum
2. Assessment
3. Instruction
4. Supportive Learning Environment
5. Professional Development
6. Leadership

These six domains are further detailed in 37 indicators that identify specific practices that directly impact school success. School planning tools, processes, and interventions are solidly grounded in the six domains and detailed indicators. Products such as the On-Site Instructional Audit, Self-Study Process, and the online school planning tool Alaska STEPP are all designed to help school communities apply the six domains and specific indicators to their unique needs and context. The Alaska STEPP online tool includes rubrics for the school-level and district-level indicators to assist schools and districts in assessing their level of implementation of these effective practices.

SIX DOMAINS of EFFECTIVE SCHOOLS

Curriculum

Domain 1.0: There is evidence that the curriculum is aligned, implemented, and used in conjunction with the local and Alaska state standards. A school or district curriculum is an educational plan that defines all content to be taught, the instructional methods to be used, and the assessment processes to be employed for documenting student achievement. It is aligned with state standards and allows for the collection of data to inform instruction. Ideally, all aspects of the curriculum are coordinated across grade levels so that the goals and objectives can be met. In addition to the academic subjects covered, a curriculum includes other learning opportunities for students.

Assessment

Domain 2.0: There is evidence that assessment of student learning is frequent, rigorous, and aligned with Alaska's state standards. Assessment is the process of collecting, recording, scoring, monitoring, and interpreting information about a student's progress, the effectiveness of teaching, and the school's

overall effectiveness. Summative assessments are used at the end of a unit, semester, or school year for a record of accountability. Formative assessments are given on a regular basis to monitor progress and inform instructional decisions. Teachers and other school staff members must be supported by school and district administrative leadership in their efforts to collect and use summative and formative assessment data.

Instruction

Domain 3.0: There is evidence that effective and varied instructional strategies are used in all classrooms to meet the needs of each student. Effective instruction incorporates strategies and methods to meet the learning needs of students who function at varied levels within a classroom. Instruction that encourages each student to learn at or above grade level builds student depth of knowledge. High expectations ensure that learning is rigorous. Highly effective teachers are actively involved in making decisions about accommodating individual needs, interests, and learning styles.

Supportive Learning Environment

Domain 4.0: There is evidence that the school culture and climate provide a safe, orderly environment conducive to learning. Safety and order, an emphasis on academic achievement, and attention to assessment and monitoring, are all factors in creating a supportive learning environment. Schools that foster a positive school climate create a culture of cohesiveness and a high level of morale among both students and the staff.

Professional Development

Domain 5.0: There is evidence that professional development is based on data and reflects the needs of students, schools, and the district. Well-planned, ongoing professional development involves teachers in their own learning and ultimately leads to improved student achievement. It is based on scientifically based practice and is practical, job embedded and results oriented. Professional learning communities are used to support effective staff development and allow for coaching, mentoring, collaboration, and a collective responsibility for student learning.

Leadership

Domain 6.0: There is evidence that school administrative leaders focus on improving student achievement. Leadership at the school level is a process of guiding improvements in student learning. Successful leaders develop a vision for their schools based on their personal and professional values. They can articulate this vision at every opportunity and influence their staff and community to share the vision. The management of learning—its structures and activities—is focused toward the achievement of this shared vision.

Alaska Effective Schools Framework: Domain Indicators

Curriculum	
Indicator	
1.1	The district-approved curricula, which are aligned with Alaska State Standards, are being implemented.
1.2	A review process is used to determine if the curricula addresses the learning needs of all students. <i>(District level only.)</i>
1.3	The district consistently reviews adoption and/or development of curricula based on the Alaska State Standards for each content area. <i>(District level only.)</i>
1.4	Assessment data are used to identify gaps in the curricula.
1.5	A district-wide review process is used to determine if the district-approved curricula address the learning needs of all students and to make changes to the curricula when needed.
Assessment	
Indicator	
2.1	School and district-wide assessments are aligned to the Alaska State Standards and district curricula.
2.2	School and district staffs use established systems for managing and accessing data.
2.3	Universal screening assessments are administered multiple times a year, in all SBA-tested content areas.
2.4	School staff reviews SBA data to evaluate school programs and student performance.
Instruction	
Indicator	
3.1	There is a system in place to ensure that classroom instructional activities are aligned with the Alaska State Standards.
3.2	A coherent, written, school-wide plan to help low performing students become proficient has been implemented.
3.3	The use of research-based instructional practices guides planning and teaching.
3.4	Teachers regularly measure the effectiveness of instruction using formative assessment.
3.5	District and school leaders collaborate with the community to communicate high academic expectations to students.
Supportive Learning Environment	
Indicator	
4.1	Effective classroom management strategies that maximize instructional time are evident throughout the school.
4.2	School-wide operational procedures are in place to minimize disruptions to instructional time. <i>(School level only.)</i>
4.3	District and school-wide behavior standards in policy and are communicated to staff, parents, and students.
4.4	The school has implemented an attendance policy.
4.5	Extended learning opportunities are made available and utilized by students in need of additional support.
4.6	The school and classroom environments reflect cultural awareness and understanding of cultural values of the students and community.

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4.7	Staff communicates effectively with parents about learning expectations, student progress, and ways to reinforce learning at home.
4.8	Staff communicates with parents and community member to inform them about school priorities and to invite their participation.
4.9	Physical facilities are safe and orderly.
Professional Development	
Indicator	
5.1	Student achievement data are a primary factor in determining professional development priorities.
5.2	District teacher and principal evaluation processes are aligned with the Alaska Professional Teacher Standards and the Standards for Alaska's Administrators. <i>(District level only.)</i>
5.3	Professional development is embedded into the daily routines and practices of school staff.
5.4	Mentoring is provided to support new teachers in the development of instructional and classroom management skills.
5.5	Sufficient time and resources are allocated to support professional development outlined in the school improvement plan.
Leadership	
Indicator	
6.1	District/school leaders facilitate the development of the district/school improvement goals and the alignment of district and school goals.
6.2	District and school leaders assist staff in understanding student achievement data and its use in improving instruction.
6.3	District staff systematically monitors the implementation of the school improvement plans. <i>(District level only.)</i>
6.4	District and school leaders ensure that staff have access to and are implementing Alaska State Standards.
6.5	School leader conducts formal and informal observations and provides timely feedback to teachers on their instructional practice. <i>(District level only.)</i>
6.6	District and school leaders have a productive, respectful relationship with parents and community members regarding school improvement efforts.
6.7	District has a process for the school instructional leader to receive support and guidance as part of the administrator evaluation process. <i>(District level only.)</i>
6.8	School leader regularly analyzes assessment and other data, and uses the results in planning for the improved achievement of all students. <i>(District level only.)</i>
6.9	District provides information and training in the use of evaluation policies and procedures for all personnel. <i>(District level only.)</i>